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ABSTRACT

The number of farms in rural America continued to decline. In 1974, 23,420 farms went out of business. Farm subsidy payments, originally designed to assist small farmers, contributed little to the survival of the small farmer. The 1974 increased costs in fuel and fertilizer alone reduced net farm income by \$5 billion--approximately a \$2,500 reduction in net income per farm. Although farm prices declined during 1974, prices paid by consumers at the supermarket continued to climb. Yet, the farmer received less than 41 cents of every food dollar spent by consumers. Evidence showed that market concentration (the lack of competition) led to higher food costs. Agribusiness not only contributed to increased food costs but threatened the existence of the independent farmer as well. Nearly 25 percent of all food production was "vertically integrated" through outright corporate ownership or through contracts. Farmworkers also suffered from low wages, seasonal work, limited coverage under protective labor legislation, increased mechanization, poor education, and critical health and housing needs. However, organizations such as the National Sharecroppers Fund, farmer and craft co-ops, and land-reform groups are working on these problems, showing that reform and revitalization in rural America are possible. (NQ)

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or electricity, require only one toilet per fifteen employees, and do not require that toilets, bathing and washing facilities, or garbage receptacles be in the area of the camp.³⁵

The fact is that the Department of Labor, which has the responsibility for enforcing occupational safety and health standards and minimum wage laws for migrant workers, has failed to do its own job. Despite two serious accidents in Florida in 1974, in which 86 workers were injured and one killed, the Department of Labor has failed to enforce standards protecting farmworkers from unsafe equipment. The Department has also failed to protect farmworkers from dangerous pesticide poisoning.

The Manpower Administration admits that there are more migrant workers than there is unskilled work for them to do. Yet 2,923 aliens were allowed to be imported in 1974 to pick apples in Virginia, West Virginia, and New York alone.

In testimony before the House Subcommittee on Agricultural Labor, a Department of Labor official responsible for enforcing crew leader registration statutes admitted that, of the estimated 5,000 crew leaders, only 1,855 had registered and only two crew leaders had ever been prosecuted since the law went into effect in 1963.³⁶

The apparent inability of the Department of Labor to enforce migrant worker protections inevitably leads to exploitation of farmworkers. Early in 1974, four migrant workers in South Carolina accused a crew leader of peonage and violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act.³⁷ The complaint stated that the migrant workers were paid considerably less than the current minimum wage of \$1.60 per hour and were given no statement of earnings. Deductions were taken for food (\$20 per week), travel, and goods purchased at the camp store which was operated by the crew leader. These workers actually earned less than \$15 per week and were therefore perpetually in debt to the crew leader, who insisted they pay off the debt by continuing to work for him.

It is estimated that agribusiness saves \$3 billion a year in labor costs as a result of low wages, the lack of collective bargaining, and nonenforcement of the laws to protect migrant labor.³⁸ The failure of Congress to pass a new Sugar Act in 1974 means that 15,000 sugar workers will lose a proposed minimum wage of \$2.40 to \$2.60 per hour and continue at the minimum rate of \$1.80 per hour.

The work of Cesar Chavez among migrant farmworkers in California, Arizona, and Florida has brought wages up to a minimum of \$2.50 and an average approaching four

35. MLAP Monthly Report, Migrant Legal Action Program, October 1974, p. 3.

36. Hearings on H.R. 7597, op. cit., p. 95-105.

37. MLAP Monthly Report, August 1974, p. 8.

38. Ronald B. Taylor, "Something in the Wind," *The Nation*, February 22, 1975, p. 207.

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THE CONDITION OF FARMWORKERS AND SMALL FARMERS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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REPORT TO THE NATIONAL BOARD
by James M. Pierce, Executive Director
NATIONAL SHARECROPPERS FUND
and RURAL ADVANCEMENT FUND

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**"Take a good look at the current scene, at events happening right now,
and you see a great industry going through transition."**

—Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz

Early in 1974, a farm extension agent in a small rural county predicted that 100 farms would fold during the year in that county alone. In the previous ten years, the number of farms in the county had already declined from 1,528 to 869.¹ The prediction proved prophetic.

Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz has claimed to be "doing my utmost to see that small farmers and family farmers have the chance to grow into economic farm units that will keep up with the times."² Despite Dr. Butz's "best" efforts, 23,420 farms went out of business in 1974.³ To those concerned with the fate of the family farm and the quality of rural life, Dr. Butz replies, "Our agricultural policy has been rooted in the nostalgia of the past."⁴

In fiscal 1974, direct government payments to farmers totaled \$2.5 billion, while the major commodity programs—those for wheat, cotton, and feed grains—totaled \$2.3 billion.⁵ These subsidy payments, however,

are based on farm size; the larger the farm, the larger the payment. Sixty-six percent of all farmers receiving payments received \$500 or less; yet fewer than one percent of the farmers received 21 percent of all payments.⁶ Clearly, these distortions in government subsidy payments, a program originally designed to assist small farmers, have actually contributed little to the survival of the small farmer.

All farmers are being squeezed by incredible increases in the cost of fuel, fertilizer, and machinery on the one hand and declining prices at the farm level on the other. The 1974 increased costs in fuel and fertilizer alone reduced net farm income by 5 billion dollars—approximately a \$2,500 reduction in net income per farm.⁷ The forecast is for continued high fuel costs and a continued slide in the price the farmer receives. By early 1975, farmers were receiving over 15 percent less for their products than in 1974, portending an even larger exodus of small farmers.⁸

1. *Report on Nutrition and Food Availability*, Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, December 1974, p. 11.
2. *Congressional Record*, March 1972, p. E1749.
3. *Agricultural Statistics 1974*, p. 42.
4. *Washington Post*, December 8, 1974, p. 18.

5. Address of Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz before FAR-MAR-CO Annual Meeting, Kansas City, Missouri, February 5, 1974.
6. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1974*, p. 608.
7. Unpublished memorandum by Leo U. Mayer, Senior Specialist in Agriculture, on Fuel Costs and Farm Costs.
8. *Washington Newsletter*, National Farmers Union, March 7, 1975.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's persistent but erroneous faith in the efficiency of large corporate production units (despite the findings of an earlier USDA study concluding that small farms are more efficient)

has dramatic implications far beyond the continued demise of America's small farms. **The seemingly innocent hypothesis that "bigness is better" directly and adversely affects not only Americans but people around the world.**

"Had not the United States so single-mindedly pursued political and commercial goals with its food supplies, the world and the United States food situation today would be markedly better."

—Senate Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs

In the drought-plagued region of Africa just south of the Sahara, a baby, its stomach distended by hunger and malnutrition, waits for food that will never come. In the world's forty poorest nations, over 800 million people live precariously close to starvation. In India alone, an estimated 10-30 million people may well die from starvation unless they receive a massive influx of food aid.⁹

But the human misery of starvation and famine is not confined to Tanzania or Bangladesh. Throughout 1974, the evening news gave reports on ever-increasing food prices and on America's elderly subsisting on cans of dog food. Since 1972, food prices have risen 33 percent—a 12 percent

increase in 1974 alone.¹⁰ The Department of Agriculture is predicting yet another 15 percent increase in the price of food—perhaps 20 percent for 1975.¹¹

Unemployment, heaped on top of spiraling food costs and double-digit inflation, is making hunger a very real threat for more and more Americans. Literally millions of people who have worked all their lives are now suddenly participating in the food stamp program. The most recent official estimate is that 17.1 million Americans are using food stamps. A study by Gary V. Bickel and Maurice MacDonald indicates that at least an additional 20 million are eligible to participate in the program but are not doing so.¹²

9. *Journal of Current Social Issues*, Fall 1974, p. 22.

10. *Report on Nutrition*, Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, Part 1, March 1975, p. 26.

11. *Community Nutrition Institute Weekly Report*, January 30, 1975.

12. *Report on Nutrition*, op. cit., p. 6.

Despite dramatic increases in federal spending on the food stamp program—\$250 million in 1969 to 4 billion in 1974—hunger in America has actually been on the rise. Ronald Pollack, Director of the Food Research and Action Center in New York, told the Senate Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, “I would be pleased to tell you that we have made substantial progress in the effort to eradicate hunger. . . . **The sad and tragic truth is that, over the past several years, we have moved backwards in our struggle to end hunger, poverty, and malnutrition.**”¹³

Writing in the *Journal of Current Social Issues*, Theodore H. Erickson cites several reasons for this basic failure:

- One-fifth of the families in the nation cannot afford a minimum diet.
- Food prices rose by approximately 70 percent between 1960 and 1973 (and 12 percent more in 1974).
- The price of traditionally low-cost foods increased dramatically between March 1970 and March 1974—pork sausage up 68.8 percent; hamburger up 60.3 percent; dried beans up 256 percent; rice up 124 percent.

Starvation around the world, millions using food stamps, and Americans eating dog and cat food are inexorably related to a government policy decision to embark unilaterally on “free trade” for agricultural

commodities. Secretary of Agriculture Butz is delighted to point out that farm exports have increased from 18 billion dollars in 1972 to more than 22 billion dollars in 1974.¹⁴ The Russian grain deal signaled the beginning of this shift in U.S. agricultural policy and has resulted, according to the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, in a reduction in United States stockpiles, higher food prices at home, and food price inflation around the world.¹⁵

For those industrialized nations able to afford to pay the U.S. export price, America’s “free market” policy has meant only higher food prices. But for developing nations and for millions of Americans, the policy has meant disaster. From 1965 to 1972, 80 percent of the world’s food aid was provided by the United States. By 1974, we provided only about one-third as much wheat for food aid as we did in 1970.¹⁶ While the U.S. failed to commit itself to an increased food aid contribution at the 1974 World Food Conference in Rome, the Ford Administration announced in early January 1975 that it would make an additional 500 million dollars available for the food-for-peace program for South Korea, Chile, and South Vietnam.¹⁷

Clearly, United States food policy must be directed toward providing every American with a decent diet. It should also embody the desire of every American that the hungry around the world be fed.

13. *Journal of Current Social Issues*, op. cit., p. 21

14. Statement of Secretary of Agriculture Butz for hearings on Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 before Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee, February 20, 1975

15. *Report on Nutrition and Food Availability*, op. cit., p. 6

16. *Ibid.*, p. 7

17. *The New York Times*, January 28, 1975, p. 6

"It's about time we stopped passing along the savings in distribution costs to the customer. I think we ought to keep some of it for ourselves."

—Anonymous Supermarket Spokesman

In the summer of 1974, a federal court jury in San Francisco awarded six cattlemen a \$32.7 million verdict against the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company in a lawsuit charging that retail grocery chains had conspired to fix the price of beef. Basically the suit claimed that the major chains had conspired to buy beef at a low price while continuing to charge their retail customers high prices. Similar suits are pending in Nebraska, Texas, and Iowa.¹⁸

Although farm prices declined during 1974, prices paid by consumers at the supermarket continued to climb. While farmers were receiving 27 percent less for their cattle in August 1974 than a year earlier, the retail price of meat rose 11.9 percent. While wheat prices declined 5 percent during the same period, the price of bread went up 35 percent.¹⁹ For all of 1974, the difference between

farm prices and retail prices increased by more than 21 percent.²⁰

It is not the family farmer who is waxing fat at the expense of the consumer. Far from it. Despite a continued spiral in food prices, the farmer received less than 41 cents of every food dollar spent by consumers in 1974—down from 46 cents in 1973.²¹ Since 1972, the family farmer's costs have increased by 122 percent, while the prices actually paid to the farmer for farm products have increased by only 10 percent.²²

At a pre-economic-summit conference in September, Professor Williard Mueller of the University of Wisconsin, former Director of the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Economics, stated, "During the first half of 1974, three out of four of the largest grocery product firms had greater profits than during the same period last year. Between

18. *Washington Post*, March 9, 1975, p. B-3

19. *Report on Nutrition*, op. cit., p. 11

20. *Ibid.*, p. 11

21. *The Farm Index*, USDA, January 1, 1975, p. 15

22. *Journal of Current Social Issues*, op. cit., p. 10

January and July 1974, farm prices dropped 10.8 percent . . . and consumer food prices rose by 4.4 percent."²³

Supermarket officials blamed higher food prices on everything from Liberian oil to Peruvian anchovies but failed to mention their own increased profits or those of the myriad of middlemen positioned between the farmer and the consumer.

Dramatic food price increases are the inevitable result of the practices and policies which allow our food economy to be dominated by a few large marketers and

retailers—the Safeways, the Giants, the A&P's. **The price the consumer pays bears little relationship to the price paid to the farmer. There is ample evidence that market concentration—the lack of competition—leads to higher food costs.** Three years ago, a Federal Trade Commission staff study revealed that thirteen food lines alone were overpriced by \$2.1 billion because of monopoly power. This trend has continued, not abated.

But the Department of Agriculture does not actively pursue anti-competitive practices in the food industry unless "invited to do so" by the Justice Department.²⁴

"The doctrine of (today's) agricultural establishment is bigness, technology, and more production per man."

—Lauren Soth, Des Moines Register and Tribune

If market concentration leads to higher consumer food prices, agribusiness not only contributes to increased food costs but threatens the existence of the independent farmer as well.

Agriculture is rapidly becoming more concentrated and more noncompetitive. Nearly 25 percent of all American food production is "vertically integrated" through outright corporate ownership or through contracts. Today 95

23. *Report on Nutrition*, op. cit., p. 14

24. *Ibid.*, p. 7

percent of processed vegetables and 85 percent of citrus fruits are vertically integrated. Thus a company like Tenneco not only makes farm machines, agricultural chemicals, and food containers, but also plants, harvests, and markets food.

In most instances, agribusiness achieves vertical integration through contracts with farmers. It is easier and cheaper for a corporation to rent a farmer than to become one. Under contractual integration, a farmer is told what to produce, how it is to be produced, and what is to be paid for it. The terms of the contract obviously determine the degree to which the farmer remains independent or is reduced to a corporate serf.

The manager of the California Canning Peach Association told a House subcommittee that individual farmers are virtually powerless against the large corporations. "Contract terms are usually preprinted and tendered to the farmer on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Squeezed by this economic necessity of immediate sale, the farmer is reduced to a comparatively helpless economic unit."²⁵

Already 7.6 percent of our large farms control over 52 percent of our food and fiber production.²⁶ Ralston Purina, Pillsbury, Swift, and a few other corporations have 97 percent of the broiler industry under contract. A Tenneco subsidiary controls 70 percent of the date

industry, and Del Monte produces approximately 50 percent of the canned peaches.

It is official Agriculture Department policy, under Secretary Butz, to overlook the problems attendant upon unchecked agribusiness. Butz admits that agribusiness is part of his clientele. "Indeed it is, and I make no apology for it. That's been demagogued a great deal."

Demagogued or not, the fact is that the bulk of agricultural research upon which the large corporations base their multimillion-dollar, multinational industry is carried on by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the land-grant college system. During the past thirty years, USDA has developed a mass of agricultural gadgetry for the benefit of agribusiness, including the technology to genetically redesign tomatoes, produce cantaloupe that grow on bushes, defuzz peaches, color chickens with chemicals, fatten cattle with drugs, and chemically skin catfish.

Despite the collapse of Missouri Foods International's plans to build the world's largest hog factory, there are still attempts by feed companies and packing houses to integrate U.S. hog production. A report called "Who Will Sit Up With The Corporate Sow?" by the Center for Rural Affairs, in Nebraska, reveals an "amazing mushrooming"

25. *Journal of Current Social Issues*, op. cit., p. 12

26. *Report on Nutrition*, op. cit., p. 43.

of corporate hog production in that state. "The 39 farrowing units inventoried in the report alone farrow over 22,000 sows . . . , equivalent to the production of 1,600 average individual producers."²⁷

Apparently current U.S. policy accepts the industrialization of agriculture as both necessary and good. Two Agriculture Department economists predict that, by 1985, "food products will be just one of many

lines of consumer goods. . . . Agriculture will be drawn into a system that will govern future output responses through rigid contract specifications or direct participation in production under business rules now commonly employed in the commercial sector at large."²⁸

Clearly this would mean that the day of the independent farmer who answers only to himself would be past, and the benefits he brings to the nation would disappear.

"The problem is not cost. The problem frankly is a contempt for the workers, an attitude that workers are slaves and should be treated as such."

—Henry Pelet, Louisiana Union Official

Food production—agriculture—is the largest single sector of this nation's economy. The impact of American agriculture is tremendous. It employs one out of seven Americans.²⁹ More than 450,000 nonfarm jobs are directly or indirectly related to the assembling, processing,

and distribution of agricultural commodities for export alone.³⁰ The farming industry realized \$27 billion in net income during 1974, but for those hard-working people who plant, cultivate, and harvest the country's food, the result of their labor is too often abject poverty.

27. *Who Will Sit Up With The Corporate Sow?*, Center for Rural Affairs, p. 34

28. *Report on Nutrition*, op. cit., pp. 52-54

29. *The Farm Index*, USDA, July 1974, p. 5

30. Address of Secretary of Agriculture Butz, February 5, 1974, op. cit.

The Department of Agriculture tells us that there were 1,178,000 hired farmworkers in 1974.³¹ Other estimates range from 2 million to 6 million. In fact, no one knows precisely how many farmworkers there are, since each federal agency that deals with farmworkers defines a farmworker differently.

Fewer than 25 percent of farmworkers are employed full time. The typical American farmworker—usually head of a family, poorly educated, engaged in nonmigratory farmwork—works an average of only 123 days a year, at \$15 per day, for an annual wage of \$1,845.

In Massachusetts, a farmworker earns \$2.15 an hour in the cranberry bogs. In Louisiana, a worker is paid \$2.30 an hour to plant, cultivate, and harvest sugarcane, but he works only 1,500 hours a year on the average, for yearly earnings of \$3,500. There is no provision for higher pay for overtime work in the busy season, nor for unemployment insurance for the off season.

Inadequate wages are not the only inequities visited upon the American farmworker population. With other rural residents, farmworkers share the worst housing in the country. Rural America, with only one-third of the

nation's population, has nearly 60 percent of the nation's substandard housing.

The nonprofit Housing Assistance Council reports that one rural home in five is substandard; nearly two-thirds of black-occupied rural housing is substandard; 95 percent of all farmworkers' homes have no flush toilet and 90 percent have no sink; the average home for migrants has two rooms for an average family of 6.4 people.

Many of the legislative protections enjoyed by most American workers since the 1930's have been systematically denied to farmworkers. They are excluded from unemployment insurance in all states except Hawaii, from workmen's compensation laws in 29 states, from restrictions on child labor in 18 states. The Fair Labor Standards Act has raised the minimum wage for farmworkers to \$1.80 per hour, effective in January 1975, but only about 35 percent of farmworkers are covered, and they are specifically excluded from overtime provisions.

It is ironic that the men, women, and children who harvest our crops continue to be under-protected, under-educated, under-clothed, and under-fed. These are the people who produce the food for the best-fed country in the world.

31. *Farm Labor*, USDA Statistical Reporting Service, January 14, 1975

"The children won't eat the onions for long and the tomatoes in the fields aren't ripe."

—James Flintroy, Migrant Worker

An estimated 203,000 migratory farmworkers were employed in U.S. agriculture in 1974. These hard-working people who move northward each summer from their homes in Florida, Texas, and California worked an average of 138 days at \$16.50 per day for an average annual income of \$2,276.³² The migrant farmworker knows too well the daily tragedies of substandard housing, economic exploitation, inadequate nutrition, and isolation.

In 1974, health-care conditions for the migrant farmworker remained critical. According to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the migrant health program still reaches less than 10 percent of the eligible population. Senator Harrison Williams, a principal sponsor of migrant health legislation, has documented some existing conditions:

- Migrant births occur outside of hospitals at nine times the national average.
- Infant mortality for migrants is 25 percent higher

than the national average.

- Mortality rates for TB and other infectious diseases among migrants are two-and-a-half times the national rate.
- The average American has seven times as many medical visits per year as the average migrant farmworker.³³

Likewise, a study by Community Change, Inc., has found that migrants are not covered by Medicare or Medicaid and generally are excluded from any hospital care.³⁴

Attempts to provide migrant farmworkers with adequate housing were dealt a severe blow when the Department of Labor issued new regulations governing conditions in temporary migrant labor camps. The proposed standards no longer require farm labor housing to be structurally sound, do not limit the number of beds or occupants in any one dwelling, do not require windows, screens,

32. *Hired Farm Labor Force*, USDA, p. 6

33. Hearings on H.R. 7597 before House Subcommittee on Agriculture Labor, p. 311

34. *Ibid.*, p. 312

to five dollars per hour. Unfortunately, the direct influence on the lives of the hundreds of thousands of other farmworkers in the nation has been very small.

At the height of the energy crisis in 1974, government officials became concerned that migrants would be unable to obtain gasoline for their northern trek. A senior staff economist at the Department of Labor estimated that

without migrant workers the United States would lose over \$500 million in unharvested crops.³⁹

The government's response to get the migrants to the crops was to publish 110,000 directories, in both English and Spanish, of all gas stations along the migrant stream, at an estimated cost of \$35,000. The bureaucrats had no solution for the high price of gasoline.

"It is not unrealistic to think that out of the Graham Center's 500 tired acres in Anson County a rural renaissance may flow."

Editorial, The Charlotte Observer

In spite of the lackluster performance of federal programs and federal agencies, the Congress continues to propose legislative remedies for the basic inequities in American agriculture.

A proposal to amend the Clayton Anti-Trust Act to prohibit the growth of corporate agriculture is pending. Ninety members of Congress have formed a Congressional Rural Caucus to monitor rural programs and legislation. Senator Richard Clark (D-Iowa), Chairman of the Senate

Subcommittee on Rural Development, continues his oversight hearings into the implementation of the Rural Development Act.

New legislation enacted in 1974 will increase the minimum wage for farmworkers to \$2.40 per hour by 1978. Congressman William D. Ford (D-Mich.), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Agricultural Labor, has introduced legislation to strengthen the federal protection of migrant workers from the abuses of crew leaders.

39. MLAP Monthly Report, June 1974, p. 8

Legislation introduced by Congressman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) to protect U.S. farmworkers from the competition of illegal aliens is still pending.

While these legislative actions offer some partial solutions to the problems of rural America, a more comprehensive rural policy needs to be developed. Clearly, other legislative measures are still required. Among these:

- Limit subsidy payments to family farmers.
- Prohibit farming by large-scale nonfarm corporations.
- Restructure land grant colleges to focus special attention on the small farmer.
- Prohibit corporate and urban investors from using tax-loss farming as a tax write-off against nonfarm income.
- Enforce residence requirements and the 160-acre limitation in federal land-reclamation areas.
- Enact federal unemployment insurance and workmen's compensation legislation for farmworkers.
- Make the Rural Development Act a reality through full funding and implementation.

Beyond a heightened sense of urgency in the Congress, there are other positive signs that rural America can be revitalized. The massive outflow of young people to big

northern cities has ebbed. The total number of people in rural communities is growing steadily—up 4.2 percent in 1974. The continued growth and prosperity of rural areas depends on agriculture—on its ability to produce adequate and decent food at a fair price for the farmer, a fair wage for the farmworker, and a reasonable price for the consumer.

Throughout the country today, many organizations are working for a better rural America. Among them are land-reform groups, agriculture-based rural communities, farmer and craft co-ops, and a vast array of local community organizations. The National Sharecroppers Fund works unremittingly to bring about needed legislative and administrative reforms. Its educational arm, the Rural Advancement Fund, has launched the Frank P. Graham Training Center, near Wadesboro, North Carolina, where farmworkers and small farmers, young people, and potential co-op leaders receive comprehensive training in farming, marketing, cooperative management, and rural vocational skills.

A rejuvenation of rural America is essential to the welfare of our whole society. Unless the problems of rural areas are solved, the problems of the cities will be intensified. A prosperous rural America will mean a healthier economy in the nation and the world.



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- Works for passage of national legislation to benefit small farmers, agricultural workers, and other rural people.
- Maintains constant pressure on government agencies and programs to make them more responsive to the needs of rural areas.
- Supports the efforts of farmworkers to organize and works to end their exclusion from the benefits of social legislation.

RURAL ADVANCEMENT FUND OF NSF



- Encourages and supports rural economic development through cooperatives and other community organizations.
- Gives comprehensive training in farming and marketing, rural vocational skills, and organization and management of cooperatives.
- Conducts educational programs to acquaint the public with problems of rural America and their relationship to urban problems.

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